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HOW NEW ZEALAND GOT ITS HONEY BEES.

By Mary M. Bowman.

Most people whose faces time has turned toward the setting sun would feel gratified could they be assured that when the light of earth fades from the vision some one had been happier because they had lived; that some little spot of earth had been made better and brighter that they had labored in it. To few men has it been given to create a great industry to add to the wealth of a country and the welfare of its inhabitants by one unselfish, unpretentious service.

This opportunity came to my friend, Mr. Noah Levering, the founder of this society and how well he improved it, is the purpose of this paper to set forth. Mr. Levering's interest and enthusiasm in local history has been the inspiration of much useful and permanent work being done, in the preservation of landmarks and valuable records of the past, not only here but much more extensively in other localities in which he has lived.

When he related the story of how New Zealand procured its Ligurnian or honey bees, which transformed it from an annual importer of red clover seed into an extensive exporter of that important factor of the dairy products of the country, as though it were an everyday affair, I was intensely interested. It was history interwoven with the industrial progress of two continents and worthy of record in the annals of this society, more permanent than the columns of ephemeral newspapers. At my earnest solicitation Mr. Levering was induced to furnish the notes from which this brief account is written, of his very successful experiment in sending the little captains of industry across the equator and eight thousand miles over seas to a foreign country.

For several years previous to 1880, when this shipment was sent, numerous trials had been made by the best apiarists of Europe and America in exporting the Ligurnian bee to the island of New Zealand, but in every instance it had resulted in failure; when the hives reached their destination the occupants were dead. The success of the project was considered so essential to the welfare of the country, the Commissioner of Colonial Industries urged the appropriation of \$2500 to send a

man to Europe on this especial errand. But, while the matter was under consideration private enterprise was at work striving to bring about its accomplishment. S. C. Farr, secretary of the Canterbury Acclimation society, had communicated with R. J. Creighton of the San Francisco Post, the official representative of New Zealand in that city. Mr. Creighton wrote to Mr. Levering, a pioneer bee keeper in Los Angeles county, then conducting a department of apiaculture in the Los Angeles Herald, requesting his assistance, which was readily given.

Mr. Creighton ordered two colonies of bees sent to San Francisco early in July in time for the steamer Australia, which was to sail for Auckland, under command of Captain Cargill. All the details were left to Mr. Levering's well known knowledge and experience in bee culture. He had hives constructed after his own plan, similar to those used in his apiary, except that special provision was made for ventilation in crossing the equator. An orifice was left in the side of the hive in front, covered with wire cloth. A small V-shaped box was placed over the opening on the outside with a sliding cover on top. The box was filled with sponge to be moistened occasionally with fresh water, which the bees could inhale through the wire cloth and which also cooled the atmosphere of their prison. A similar opening was left in the top of the hive, covered with wire and provided with a sliding lid for protection against possible cold. Several three-quarter inch augur holes in the floor permitted a circulation of air. The alighting board and the top board, each extended out about four inches and the space between being securely covered with wire cloth formed an air chamber through which the honey-makers could circulate at will, or at the promptings of instinct, as the case may be. A sufficient amount of honey in old comb well sealed over, was provided for food, a frame or two of brood comb, empty frames and frames of empty comb, kept in place by wooden slats, filled the remaining space and supplied the working implements for the ever-busy and industrious inmates. About one-half the colony with a queen was put in each hive and the tops firmly screwed down; the object of dividing the colony being to obviate the heat that the whole would engender in crossing the equator, which would have melted the comb and caused the bees to perish in their own sweetness. In Mr. Levering's opinion the failures of other shippers were due to their putting an entire colony in a hive, which, with the honey and the comb necessary, could not withstand the heat of the equator; an important factor in the success of the undertaking which had been over-

looked. After the bees were placed aboard the steamer a gentleman considered an authority on bee culture, assured Captain Cargill that they could not survive the voyage, owing to the faulty construction of the hives.

In October following, the Herald of Auckland announced the safe arrival of the Los Angeles county bees; a public demonstration of rejoicing was held and more orders for bees followed. In the course of a few months Mr. Levering shipped a number of colonies without the loss of a single bee, and the increase soon supplied New Zealand. Mr. Levering, having been so successful with Italian bees, was asked to send bumble bees, but after a long and fruitless search for them in Southern California, he was forced to abandon the project, as they are not natives of this part of the world.

Red clover had previously been raised in New Zealand, but produced no seed, there being no insect there to pollinize the blossom, consequently seed for each crop had to be imported from other countries. In 1889 the newspapers of Auckland stated that the island was then exporting clover seed of home raising. New Zealand is unquestionably deeply indebted to California and to Mr. Levering for the growth of its resources in apiculture and a very valuable and appetizing food product, but aside from newspaper glory, the mere price of the colonies of bees and the satisfaction of a deed well done there has been no substantial acknowledgement of the debt.